

REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: Grants Mining District

DATE: August 11, 2014

CONTACT: Carl Edlund, Director

PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: Hot Issue - FYI

DEADLINE DATE: N/A

ISSUE

Legacy uranium mining and milling operations in the Grants Mining District of northwestern New Mexico have caused environmental impacts on a fairly large scale.

BACKGROUND/CURRENT STATUS:

From the mid-1950s to the 1990s operations at over 100 legacy uranium mines and several large uranium mills in the Grants Mining District contaminated soil and ground water with radiation and metals. A multi-agency 5-Year Plan was developed in 2010 by Region 6 and other federal, state and tribal partners to promote and advance work needed to assess and mitigate environmental impacts from uranium mining and milling. This work includes a basin-wide ground water investigation for the San Mateo Creek drainage basin and placement of the Jackpile Mine on the NPL.

In a matter relevant to the Grants Mining District, settlement agreements were reached in the Tronox lawsuits against Anadarko in 2011 for Bankruptcy Trust (\$12 million) and 2014 for Fraudulent Conveyance (\$5.15 billion). Region 9 was a signatory to the lawsuits. Some amount of payment from the settlements is anticipated to fund cleanups of uranium mine sites on Navajo land as well as in the Grants Mining District that were operated by Kerr McGee, a predecessor to Anadarko.

EPA has performed radiological assessments at nearly 900 residential properties and structures under its removal authority since 2009 at traditionally Hispanic villages, Laguna and Acoma Pueblos, the Mormon Farms area south of Homestake and in the village of Bluewater. Of these, 139 properties had excess gamma radiation associated with the re-use and/or repurposing of uranium mine related waste material; 129 of these have been cleaned up, two are in progress, and the remaining eight are targeted for cleanup.

MESSAGE:

- Second Five-Year Plan: EPA and other federal, state and tribal partners will develop a second five-year plan (2015-2019) to further advance our objectives for assessing and cleaning up environmental impacts caused by historic uranium mining and milling and protecting human health.
- Community Concerns about Ground Water Cleanup: The Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance (BVDA) and the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) are pleased that EPA is conducting a basin-wide ground water investigation, but are upset

with efforts to remediate ground water at the Homestake NPL site near Grants, which has been ongoing for over 30 years.

- Lack of Mine Waste Repositories for Contaminated Soil: EPA Region 6 anticipates a need for mine waste repositories to hold the large volume of contaminated soil that is present at many legacy uranium mines within the Grants Mining District, including the former Kerr McGee mines identified in the Tronox settlements.
- Coordination between Regions 6 and 9 on Tronox Settlement: Although Region 9 will receive the payments from the Tronox Settlements, Region 6 should take the lead on any work to be conducted at the 22 former Kerr McGee mines in the Ambrosia Lake area with those payments as they are under Region 6 jurisdiction.

CONTACT: Carl Edlund, Director, Superfund Program 214-665-8124